

THE LAKE OF LUCERNE



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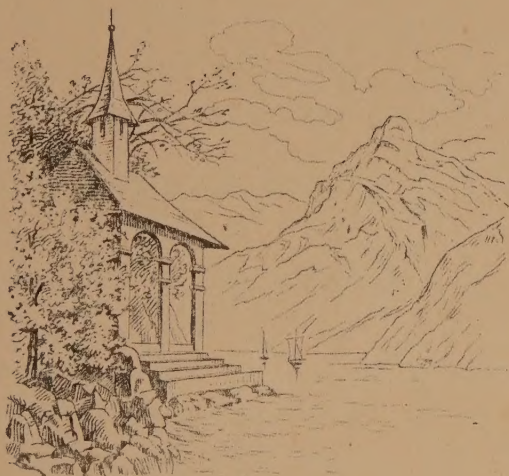


FLUELLEN AND THE ST. GOTHARD VALLEY.

Beautiful Europe

The Lake of Lucerne

By
Joseph E. Morris



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THE LAKE OF LUCERNE

I

IF Lucerne is the most widely advertised lake in the world—if its name, in recent years, has come to be associated, less with ancient gallant exploits of half-legendary William Tells than with cheap Polytechnic Tours and hordes of personally conducted trippers, it has luckily forfeited singularly little of its ancient charm and character, and remains, if you visit it at the right moment—or at any moment, if you are not too fastidious in your claims for solitude and æsthetic exclusiveness—possibly the most beautiful and unquestionably the most dramatic and striking of all the half-dozen or so greater lakes, Swiss or Italian, that cluster round the outskirts of the great central knot of Alps. “Cluster round the outskirts,” for it is characteristic of all these lakes, just as it is characteristic of most of our greater English meres at home—of Windermere,

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for example, or Bassenthwaite, or Ullswater—that, though their upper ends penetrate more or less deeply (and Lucerne and Ullswater more deeply than any) among the bases of the hills, yet their lower reaches, whence discharge the mighty rivers, invariably trail away into open plain, or terminate among mere gentle undulations. Of all this class of lake, then—lakes of the transition—Lucerne is at once the most complex in shape, the least comprehensible in bulk, and the most immediately mountainous in character. The most complex in shape, because, though it is usual to describe this as a cross, yet the cross is so distorted in its lower and major member as practically to lose all really cross-like character, and to remind one rather of a wriggling viper. The least comprehensible in bulk, because there is actually no point on its surface, or on its immediate margin, or perhaps indeed anywhere, whence it is possible to grasp its basin as a whole, as it is possible, for example, in a rough kind of way, to grasp the shape and dimension of such a much larger lake as Geneva from the vineyards in the neighbourhood of Aubonne. The most immediately mountainous in character, because no other big Swiss lake, as already intimated,

“To Sentinel Enchanted Land”

extends itself so deeply into the heart of giant hills, or is bordered so immediately by steep and rugged mountains. Thus Lucerne gains in surprise and mystery what it loses in simple graciousness ; is dramatic and startling where other lakes are tranquil and merely soothing ; and is certainly, to sum up, the most splendid and magnificent lake in the Alps, if not the most dignified and beautiful.

II

THOSE who approach Lucerne directly by the railway fitly approach the most dramatic of lakes by the most dramatic of vestibules. For those who use their eyes, indeed, there are abundant distant hints of the coming splendour ; the Alps are first visible, in tolerably clear weather, as we descend the long wall of Jura on to the Aar at Aarberg ; and further on, beyond the peaty flats round the Mauensee, and as we quit the lake of Sempach, Pilatus and Rigi, like two tall sentinels—

“Mountains that like giants stand
To sentinel enchanted land”—

come suddenly into view as the railway describes a giant curve, whilst between them, at greater

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distance, is glimpsed the enchanted land itself, made substantial in the Alps of Unter-Walden. Such, too, or something similar, was the young Ruskin's first view of the distant Alps on the Sunday afternoon from the city promenade at Schaffhausen. "Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed—the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us ; not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death." Yet in spite of these reiterated hints, previsions, and premonitions, when we step finally from the noise, and bustle, and subdued light of the railway-station at Lucerne into the brilliant morning light of the river quays outside, the great vision that then breaks upon us for the first time in its entirety—levels of shining lake, and long, horizontal precipices of wooded Rigi, and beyond, in splendid background, white confusion of shattered Alps,

"A thousand shadowy pencilled valleys,
And snowy dells in a golden air"—

startles and almost shocks us with the same sense of unearthly wonder as when for the first time in childhood the green baize curtain rolls up suddenly, and we gaze, with child's eyes, straight into the green mysteries of fairyland.



PILATUS ABOVE A SEA OF CLOUDS.

The Approach from Sursee

This first view, then, of the Vierwaldstattersee from the quays at Lucerne—far more than the first view of Lake Lemman from the bridges of Geneva, or of Zurich from the quays of Zurich city—is dramatic in its complete and abrupt transformation, in its turning upside-down, and twisting inside-out, of all our previous conceptions of our commonplace, workaday world! The thing in a way is sensational, but sensational within the modesty of nature, and certainly to be enjoyed at least once in a lifetime, and especially if one happen to be young. If one happen to be older, or has seen the thing before, there is reason good enough to quit the train at Sursee, fifteen miles short of Lucerne, and approach Lucerne thence gradually, on bicycle or foot, by a zig-zag route of gradual introduction that is pursued, I suppose, by hardly anyone, and certainly not by Cook's tourist or Polytechnic student, each of whom has borrowed Atalanta's heels. Sursee itself, though entered by a medieval gateway, has little else to show in the way of particular antiquities. Yet the town itself, in every lane and corner of it, is antiquity itself, and altogether delightful in possession of local colour. This is German Switzerland, and pro-

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claims its Teutonic stamp at every turn : the very gate by which we enter still bears above its arch the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire. From Sursee inquire your way by the long ascent to the little upland town of Beromünster, where a college for secular canons was founded in the eleventh century. In Murray's invaluable handbook, worth half a dozen Baedekers, it is stated that "the church is eleventh to twelfth century, though much altered in the eighteenth century." The description is misleading, for, though the core may be really old, it is overlaid with later classical work till most traces of medievalism are entirely obscured—the very piers of the nave arcades are monolithic shafts of pink marble. None the less it is well worth visiting, for the sake of its grand Renaissance choir stalls and sunny, silent cloister. Hence to Sempach you may find a pleasant, unfenced lane, through the open pastures and apple-orchards, that falls by easy gradients along the north shore of the placid lake. Sempach is one of the sacred political sites of Switzerland—like Morat, like Morgarten—for here was fought, in 1386, one of those great battles that vindicated her freedom, and linked

Arnold von Winkelried

her name for ever with England's as a synonym
for liberty :

“Two Voices are there ; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains.”

The legend of Arnold von Winkelried, like that of Tell, has been questioned of recent years ; it first appears, more than half a century after the supposed event, “in an interpolated notice in a Zurich chronicle (1438 or later), and a popular song of the latter half of the same century.” True or false it will bear retelling, and indicates correctly enough the national spirit, even though it err in narration of historical fact. After all, most children know it by heart : how Arnold von Winkelried, finding it impossible by any other means to break the serried Austrian ranks,

“For victory shaped an open space,
By gath'ring, with a wide embrace,
Into his single heart, a sheaf
Of fatal Austrian spears.”

Arnold is said to have come from Stans, where his statue still stands in the market-place ; where his armour is still preserved in the Rathhaus ; and where it is certain at least that a family of the same name was resident in the neighbourhood at the time of the great fight. His house is also shown

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on the skirts of the little town—or, more correctly, may be found by those who seek it with much diligence; for though the victory itself is not forgotten in Switzerland, and was, indeed, celebrated with much pomp at its quincentenary in 1886, it is hard to get lucid instructions in Stans itself as to the whereabouts of the national hero's birthplace, or even to authenticate its continued existence. I found it at last—a little old farm in the suburb, “of which one portion, including a low archway with groined entrance and low pillars, may be as old as the time of Winkelried.”

Sempach itself, like Sursee, is a picturesque old town, with another quaint old gateway. The lake, though five miles long, is quite outside the mountains, though the splintered crags of Pilatus give a distant hint of Alpine splendour. The remaining nine miles or so to Lucerne are perhaps a trifle dull, and the entrance to the city is through the usual straggling suburb—out of all reasonable proportion to the place itself—that conducts us too frequently to a town in Switzerland.

Old and New

III

IN France I always reckon that a town of less than fifty thousand people is likely to retain untouched its medieval character, or at any rate its atmosphere of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Exceptions of course occur—I make one in the case of Aix-en-Provence, which seems to have been mostly rebuilt, though in very delightful fashion, as late as the eighteenth century. Mere modern watering-place growths, again, like Biarritz or Vichy, must also be eliminated—they had obviously no character to lose. But apart from towns like these, my general proposition will be acceptable, I think, to anyone who dwells, on the one hand, on places like Beauvais, or Cambrai, or Chartres, or, on the other, on bigger cities, such as Angers, or Orleans, or Tours. In Switzerland, which appears to me, much more than France, to be bursting with prosperity and redundant population, it seems on the whole harder to suggest a general rule. Neuchâtel, for example, with twenty-five thousand people, is virtually a handsome modern town. Berne, on the contrary,

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with a population of over ninety thousand, preserves its ancient aspect in remarkable degree. Luckily Lucerne, in a middle position, with a population of forty-one-odd thousand souls, leans more to the example of Berne than to that of Neuchâtel or Lausanne. The immediate front to the lake, of course, just as at Geneva, is blatantly new of mode—it is largely, in fact, a conglomerate of palatial modern hotels. But immediately behind—immediately you quit the broad sweep of quays and promenades, and plunge almost anywhere at random into the network of ancient streets—you are able to forget at once, whether you linger in the shadow of the fifteenth-century church of the Bare-foot Friars (the Barfüsserkerche, or Church of the Franciscans) ; or bask in open sunlight on the narrow quay, at the back of the sixteenth-century Rathhaus, by the side of the green and rushing Reuss ; or climb the steep pitch of hill behind the town to the line of ancient walls, with their long line of stately watch-towers (like those at Fribourg and Morat) that stretches with so much picturesque dignity across the base of the blunt angle—so blunt as scarcely to be an angle at all—between the river and the lake ; or seek

The Collegiate Church

shelter from the glare in the long galleries of the two old wooden bridges, with their mellow red-tiled roofs, that manage to survive across the river—plunge, I repeat, where you will into this labyrinth of old thoroughfares, with their plastered and painted house-fronts, and gaily splashing fountains in courts and corners, and broad eaves that project far across the street, and you are reminded at every step, not of the modern tourist resort of world-wide reputation that is visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists every year, but of that old Lucerne that grew up gradually round the Benedictine monastery that was founded here in the year 750, or thereabouts, by the abbots of Murbach in Alsace, and that gets its name from that St. Leodegar, or Leger, who was patron of the monastery. The monks gave way to a college of secular canons in 1455. Unhappily, of the old collegiate church there are virtually no remains. The twin west spires, indeed, date from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and are good Flamboyant Gothic; but the body of the existing building was erected after a fire in 1633—the date is on the west doorway—and is purely Classical, though quite a good example of its particular style and

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date. Correspondingly late is the woodwork inside, including the fine stalls in the choir. Other points of interest will be found by those who seek for them: the panels of old glass (one is dated 1650) ; the ironwork and carving of the great west door ; and the two richly sculptured reredoses at the ends of the two aisles, one of which has a Pietà, and one a Death of the Virgin. Even more remarkable is the stately, classical cloister that encompasses the whole church like an Italian Santo Campo. All is very splendid, yet all would be gladly surrendered in exchange for what the relentless flames devoured in 1633. The one is a work of the completed Renaissance—learned, correct, and conscious, but perhaps a trifle cold. The other, we may be certain, though it may have presented to the critic a thousand faults of detail, whispered at least from its dim aisles and chapels “the last enchantments of the Middle Age.” The one is the laborious product of the textbook and the studio ; the other the inevitable offspring of a vigorous and vital art. The one is the clever expression of an individual talent ; the other the collective offering of a people’s enthusiasm and faith.

The Hofkirche, then, may be entered casually,



THE OLD BRIDGE WITH SHRINE, LUCERNE.

The Kapell-Brücke and Wasserturm

examined superficially, and quitted without regret. Time will be better spent in lingering on the old wooden foot-bridges that still span the green and insurgent Reuss at some little distance below its exit from the lake. Formerly there were three ; but the longest—the old Hof-brücke—was sacrificed in 1852 to the passion for spurious improvement. Of the two that survive, the Kapell-Brücke is by far the most important, and apparently gets its name from the old St. Peter's Chapel on the north shore of the river, to which it leads diagonally across the clear and voluminous stream. In actual touch with this, but nearer the southern shore, rises the picturesque old Wasserturm, which is said once to have served as a lighthouse (*lucerna*), and to have given Lucerne its name. The Premonstratensian Abbey of La Lucerne, near Avranches, in Normandy, is stated in Joanne's handbook to have got its title from the same source ; but the Swiss Lucerne is perhaps better derived (I do not profess to understand by what strange process of corruption) from the name of its patron, Leodegar. Anyhow, this old Water-Tower is a decidedly striking object, and conspicuous in most photographs and pictures of Lucerne, with

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its typical octagonal cap. Both the two old wooden bridges, as is common in Switzerland, are protected from the weather by open timber roofs; and inserted in the framing of these last is a series of eighteenth-century paintings, representing, in the case of the Kapell-Brücke, scenes from the history of the city, and from the lives of its patronal saints, St. Mauritius and St. Leodegar; and in the case of the lesser Spreuer, or Mühlen, Brücke a late, post-medieval representation of the grim, medieval humours of the ghastly Dance of Death. This strange *memento mori* was a favourite morality of the Middle Time; Death in the form of a skeleton (Wordsworth's "Death the Skeleton") presents himself in turn to all kinds and conditions of men—in the great series at the old abbey church of La Chaise-Dieu (Haute-Loire) in France to actually not less than thirty-five, now setting his foot with timid determination on the trailing robe of a sacrosanct Pope; now greeting with mocking glance a Cardinal, who averts his head with hasty terror; now dancing with insolent familiarity in front of an aged man; now laying his bony grasp on a troubadour, who lets his mandoline clatter to the ground in access of



THE GUTSCH, FROM LUCERNE.

The Danse Macabre

sudden fear. These are subjects depicted at La Chaise-Dieu ; but just the same spirit of gruesome raillery inspires the *danse macabre* wherever found :

“ Le pauvre en sa chaumière où le chaume le courbe
Est sujet à ses lois ;
Et la garde qui veille aux barrières du Louvre
N'en défend pas nos rois.”

At Hexham there are still four paintings on panel, representing Death with a Pope, an Emperor, a King, and a Cardinal. Browning tells us in connection with the old revellers of Venice how

“ Death stepp'd tacitly and took them
Where men never see the sun ”;

but the Death of the *danse macabre* at Hexham, as perhaps always, so far from stepping tacitly, is a grinning and grisly contortionist, writhing his repulsive anatomy into a dozen different shapes of derision. The victims alone have dignity, whilst Death is merely the jester or buffoon. Different, indeed, is the shadowy Death of the Apocrypha—“ And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and he that sat upon him, his name was Death ” ; or the mysterious, shrouded, blood-sprinkled figure (to couple small images with

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great) of the Masque of the Red Death. These particular paintings at Lucerne are necessarily small in scale, and perhaps not very legible in the dim recesses of the roof. I have never had the patience to decipher them, nor do they perhaps conform, since so unusually late in date, to the stereotyped convention of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

There is just one other spot in Lucerne which ought not to be neglected, and this, though sufficiently far removed from Death in his merely antic aspect—from the Death of “graves, of worms, and epitaphs”—has also to do with Death in his nobler guise, for it is the monument of the twenty-six Swiss officers, and seven hundred and sixty Swiss Guards, who fell in defending the Tuileries and their King on August 10, 1792. “Honour to you, brave men,” writes Carlyle, “honourable pity, through long times ! Not martyrs were ye ; and yet almost more. He was no King of yours, this Louis ; and he forsook you like a King of shreds and patches ; ye were but sold to him for some poor sixpence a day ; yet would ye work for your wages, keep your plighted word. The work now was to die ; and ye did it.” The

Faithfulness to Death

monument is fitly a lion, and was hewn out by Lukas Ahorn of Constance, after the model of Thorwaldsen, from a face of living rock ; he is pierced by a broken lance and already at point of death, one paw hangs forward limp and helpless, but the other, with claws outstretched, still clutches and guards the Bourbon lilies—a monument of faithfulness to death. The attitude and face of the great lion, “ having the most touching expression of broken strength, subdued pain, and courageous self-surrender,” are both very grandly conceived. It is sad indeed that the rock itself, though the sculpture is boarded up to protect it from winter frosts, is badly cracked in more than one direction. Closely adjacent to this fine monument, and certainly worth a visit, is the very curious Gletscher Garten, with its wonderful “ pot-holes,” or “ glacier-mills,” some of which retain their “ mill-stones ” still in situ.

IV

LOOKING eastward from the quays or the lake at Lucerne across the shining expanses of water to the great background of snow-clad Alps—visualizing those Alps in memory as we sit

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later on at home, by the side of a winter fire—most of us have probably an impression only of a very lovely, and very magnificent, but also very vague and inchoate, huddle of confused and indefinite hills. The highest peak seen at Lucerne from the Schweizerhof Quay is apparently the Tödi (11,887 feet), supreme at the point, or very nearly at the point, where Uri, Glarus, and the Grisons meet, and next to this in actual dignity is perhaps the snowy Titlis (10,627 feet), which rises above Engelberg, and also belongs, like the Tödi, to a bunch of three converging cantons—in this case Uri, Unter-Walden, and Berne. Yet these two giants, with their groups of attendant satellites, are so remote from the margin of the lake itself, and so lost amidst the company of their hardly less magnificent peers, that they strike one on the whole with less impress of overwhelming individuality—associate themselves on the whole less easily with our necessarily blurred and imperfect recollections of the Vierwaldstättersee when the lake itself is no longer seen—than two other striking hills of far less elevation, and in one case of far less noble outline, that yet rear themselves more immediately from the exact levels of the



OLD HOUSES AND BRIDGE AT LUCERNE

Pelion and Ossa

lake, and that stand more or less aloof, in conspicuous isolation, not merely from one another, but from the general confraternity of hills. Wordsworth reminds us in an admirable sonnet how

“Pelion and Ossa flourished side by side,
Together in immortal books enrolled”—

yet surely not Pelion and Ossa (I have never seen them) dominate Thessaly more insistently, or confront one another with more marked and divergent character across the intervening valley, than Swiss Rigi and Pilatus confront one another across the blue spaces of the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons, or dominate its waters from the exact margin of its shores !

Of these mountain twins of central Switzerland, Pilatus is by far the more imposing, not merely in point of elevation—the Rigi is less by a thousand feet—and immeasurably in grace of peaked and rocky outline, but also in wealth of legendary lore, and even of actual historical significance. Of legend, because Pontius Pilate, according to one account, smitten with remorse after the crucifixion of Our Saviour, ascended these lonely summits in the course of his miserable wanderings, and drowned himself here in the

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little pool (which is now dried up) on the Bründlen Alp, which lies on the less well-known slopes of the hill descending from the highest peak, or Tomlishorn (6,995 feet), in the direction of the Rumligbach. According, however, to another version, which first appears in the pages of Eusebius, Pontius Pilate committed suicide at Rome ; and it was only after a series of strange vicissitudes and wanderings, recalling, though less hallowed than, those of the body of St. Cuthbert, that his corpse was flung at last, like so much carrion, into this little mountain tarn. First it was thrown into the Tiber, but the evil spirit could not rest, and storms and floods that fell upon Rome necessitated its removal to Vienne, near Lyons, where again it found watery burial in the Rhone. Vienne, however, was now visited in turn by commotions like those at Rome ; the Lake of Geneva, the next place of interment, proved equally infelicitous ; and it was only finally in untrodden solitudes, beneath the grey limestone peaks of the Frackmünd (or *Fractus Mons*), that the hateful body, which earth refused to receive in peace, was suffered at last to hide itself in uneasy but permanent sepulchre. For “even



THE SEVEN TOWERS, LOOKING OVER LUCERNE FROM THE GUTSCH.

Pilate and Pilatus

here the wicked spirit could not rest from evil-doing. Storm and rain enveloped the mountain, the lake burst its banks, Alps were ruined, and herds swept away. At last a travelling scholar confronted the ghost, and by his magic forced him to accept a pact by which, on condition of one day's freedom, he was to remain at rest for the remainder of the year. The bargain was kept. The land was at peace, but yearly on Good Friday any shepherd who approached the haunted tarn saw, seated on a throne of rock above the water, a terrible figure clad in the red robes of magistracy." One would hasten to suppose that the story had been invented in explanation of the name; but the name Pilatus (perhaps from *pileatus*, the capped mountain, from its well-known cloud-compelling qualities) is said to date only from the eighteenth century, whilst the story is at least as old as the fourteenth.

So far the realm of legend. The realm of actual history is scarcely less astonishing, and attaches itself to legend by imperceptible ties. It is history that the city of Lucerne in the Middle Ages did actually prohibit the ascent of the mysterious hill: it is history that six priests in 1307 were condemned to several months

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of imprisonment for daring to visit the forbidden lake. The legend of the pact with the travelling scholar had at least one important variant, for it was believed that by throwing a stone into the pool the spirit could be at any time provoked, and his evil influence set free to work havoc on lake and fell. It was to avert this constant menace at the hands of audacity, or scepticism, that the city fathers promulgated the law by which access to the hill was prohibited. It was only with the Renaissance, and with the birth of the new spirit of rationalism, that the old beliefs became untenable, and that the old terrors were rendered empty—as Gareth cleaves the helm of the silent terror that

“Names himself the Night and oftener Death,”

and reveals inside “the bright face of a blooming boy.” The terrors were already grown more than a little threadbare when Conrad Gesner, the naturalist, ascended the mountain in 1555; they must nearly have vanished altogether in another thirty years, when the Curé of Lucerne, “before a crowd of witnesses, flung stones and rubbish into the lake without raising anything more than a ripple.” At the bottom, however, of all these

The Anti-Climax of Common Sense

wild stories there is a substratum of truth, for Pilatus is really a great brewer of storms, and the peasants of the neighbourhood still prognosticate the weather from the disposition of the clouds upon its summit. Thus Roseberry Topping, in Cleveland, or what greedy iron-masters have left of it, was supposed as long ago as the time of Camden to foretell the coming storm :

“If Roseberry Topping wears a cap
Let Cleveland then beware of a clap.”

Roseberry and Pilatus are in other respects curiously analogous ; each is of a typically peaked appearance ; and each is situated on the extreme edge of the hill group to which it belongs. Pilatus, it may be noted, is now ascended by a railway, and thus heaps of “unappreciative trippers” are now lightly conveyed every fine summer day to the once weirdly mysterious summit, to which the medieval climber won only surreptitiously, and perhaps in awe and terror. It is surely the anti-climax of unromantic common sense.

The Rigi, which confronts Pilatus across the lake in such startling dissimilarity, is perhaps the most popular hill in Europe, and is certainly in a sense the most vulgar. It is bad enough that a hill should be desecrated by a single mountain

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railway: it is intolerable that it should be degraded by three! How many people ascend to the Rigi Kulm on a day of tolerable weather in August from either Vitznau or Arth-Goldau one would hardly dare to guess; how many are housed at night in one or other of the monster hotels—at Rigi Kulm, at Rigi Kaltbad, at Rigi Staffel, at Rigi Scheidegg—that oppress and burden its weary summits is a matter not to be dwelt on. This is not the place to attempt a dissertation on the *quæstio vexata* of mountain railways. To the writer (who is prejudiced) the thing seems axiomatic: all that goes to make up mountain grandeur, all that is of the spirit,

“Of eye and ear—both what they half create,
And what perceive”—

all that renders a mountain a mountain, as opposed to a mere elevated mass of matter—

“Of stratified rock
Inclined at an angle of xty degrees”—

is gone in a moment when you thus strip a hill of its proper attributes—of its mystery, of its remoteness, of its difficulty of access; and there remains nothing save bulk, which you get in the Great Pyramid; and prospect, which you get from the

Mountain Railways

Eiffel Tower ; and a clever bit of engineering (diabolically clever), which is just as well got in the Great Wheel at Kensington. Yet frankly it must be confessed that if something had to be sacrificed to gratify the sensation-mongers, and the lazy, and the impotent, the Rigi might best be immolated. Just this one hill, perhaps, might be spared : but was it necessary to bind to the horns of the altar every other hill of medium size in Switzerland—the Niesen, and the Brienzer, Rothhorn, and the Schynige Platte, and the Beatenberg ; to say nothing, on the shores of Lake Lucerne itself, in addition to the Rigi, of the Burgenstock, and Pilatus, and the Stanserhorn ; and elsewhere in Switzerland of the deeper crime of the Jungfrau, and in Savoy of the crowning infamy of Mont Blanc ?

The Rigi, in fact, owing to its peculiar configuration and structure, is less hurt by this eruption of mountain railways than any other mountain in the Alps. The hill is really a whole agglomeration of hills—of which the Rigi Kulm (5,905 feet) is merely the culminating summit—which occupy very roughly the rectangular area that lies between the lakes of Lucerne, Zug, and Lowerz, and are formed largely of horizontal

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layers of red conglomerate, or pudding-stone, rock. The hill is thus distinctly of the lumpy type of mountain, as opposed to its rival, Pilatus, which belongs to the vertical, or peaked ; and owes what beauty it possesses to its long bands of ruddy precipice, down which dangle short spouts of more or less exiguous cascade, and to the solemn masses of dark wood that gird its middle flanks. The towering crags of Pilatus, like tongues of shivering flame, have here no rival in these long, parallel belts of forest, rock, and open lawn, that rise above the lake in stately tier above tier, and are hardly wilder at their summits than along the margin of the lake :

“ And as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view.”

It is not difficult among glades like these for a mountain railway to worm its way obscurely, and to hide its ugly presence beneath the garment of thick woods.

It is the fashion to spend the night on the Rigi, and to witness the sunrise next day. The writer has done it once, but the experience was disappointing : it was already broad daylight, and the whole landscape was already coldly

“Our Lady of the Snow”

visible, when the little group of shivering penitents was marshalled on the summit to watch the up-burst of a sun that itself seemed cold and grey. It may be better worth the trouble if one rises for actual daybreak, or when the sun issues forth more royally from his chamber in the east. On the whole, perhaps, it is better to avoid the Rigi in its stereotyped sensational aspects, and to investigate its secret—for secret to yield it assuredly has—unconventionally, and out of the season. I have crossed its saddle from Goldau to Weggis, between the Rigi Rotstock and the Schild, during the later days of March, when the track by which I climbed was still white with virgin snow. This was, in fact, the old pilgrim path by which devotees once ascended—may possibly still ascend—to worship at the little upland chapel (rebuilt in 1715-21) of Our Lady of the Snow (“Maria zum Schnee”). This shrine is the centre of a little colony, the oldest and quaintest of all that have developed on the Rigi; and just because it lies in a hollow of the summit peaks, and commands no distant views, has escaped the bitter ravages of modern exploitation. The spot is called Rigi Klösterli, because inhabited all the year round by a little

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group of Capuchin friars from the community at Arth, who dwell in the little hospice and serve the little chapel. This was an old centre for goat-whey cure, and the inns are delightfully old-fashioned of aspect ; the whole appearance of the spot, indeed, is full of local character, whereas most other settlements on the Rigi are cosmopolitan and commonplace. The salvation of the place is its utter lack of view : you must scramble up steep grass slopes, towards the south, to the summit of the saddle, to enlarge your horizon in a few steps from a barrier of green hill-side to a prospect so vast that you seem suddenly to have before you all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof. I do not know, indeed, that the actual range of view is greater than that commanded in France from the top of the Puy-de Dôme—

“ Si Dôme était sur Dôme
On verra les portes de Rome ”—

and certainly it is not so majestic as many more restricted views of particular groups of Alps, seen—as mountain views are almost always seen to best advantage—from the slopes, or from the summits, of lesser hills. But except from the marble roofs of Milan Cathedral there is perhaps



LOOKING ACROSS THE LAKE.

“Alps o’er Alps arise”

no other generally recognized and easily accessible point of view from which it is possible, merely by turning the head, to command so long a line of crowding Alpine summits, extending from the Sentis, in the extreme east, to Pilatus in the west, for a distance of roughly one hundred and twenty miles—

“Hill peers o’er hill, and Alps o’er Alps arise.”

Yet here, when we stand on the crest in unaccustomed solitude in the first stirrings of the spring, when the giant hotels are still mostly shut and empty, and when the high-level railway between the Kaltbad and the Scheidegg is happily obscured beneath icicle and snowdrift, there is yet no intimate revelation of the true inward spirit of Alpine scenery :

“The difficult air of the iced mountain’s top,
Where the birds dare not build nor insect’s wing
Flit o’er the herbless granite.”

The Land of Promise lies fair before us ; but here, on the saddle of the Rigi, we still linger on the threshold, though the biting morning breeze come, pine-scented, through the forest, and though the musical cow-bells tinkle for ever on the “high mountain pastures, where day first appears.”

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V

OF the five great primary divisions of the Vierwaldstättersee—and one is driven, however anxious to preserve the configuration of the cross, to recognize a fifth, and separate, division in the Bay, or Lake, of Uri—of the five great divisions of the Lake of Lucerne, that which extends to the quays of Lucerne itself is the most placid and domestic in respect of actual shoreline. True, there is always a background of lofty mountain, sufficiently magnificent and sufficiently near at hand to impress itself on the landscape as a component, and even dominant, feature ; but the actual littoral in this compartment of the lake—and Lucerne, unlike Zurich or Geneva, but to some extent like Como, is literally partitioned into compartments—is softly arcadian in character, with low, gently swelling hills of slight, inconclusive contour, knee-deep with hay and flowers, and shoulder-deep with apple-blossom and orchard. Next, I think, in ascending scale is the Bay of Küsnacht, so called from the big village at its head. The north-west shore of this is again of mildly pastoral character ;

The View from beyond Meggen

but directly from its south-east margin rise the deep, dark woods of the Rigi, supplying that hint of real Alpine sublimity—it is still merely a hint—that is wholly absent from the immediate shores of the little Lucernersee strictly so-called. The road from Lucerne to Küsnacht, where it skirts this bay beyond the big, scrambling village of Meggen, is one of the pleasantest view-points within easy touch of Lucerne whence to enjoy across the water the noble mountain background that screens the south shore of the main lake. On a mild spring evening, when this splendid landscape is an ætherialized study in black and white; when the snowflakes and cowslips are pushing up in thousands through the quickly growing grass; when the host of margent rushes scarcely quivers in the stillness; and when the opposite mountains are reflected without a ripple in the calm and silent lake, it is hard to believe that all this exquisite beauty, which seems so unearthly and unexplored, is really the much boasted, much advertised, much visited “Lovely Lucerne”—it is difficult to realize that the paddle of a steamer ever churns this unruffled mirror, or that the harsh whistle of the ascending locomotive ever wakes the echoes on steadfast Rigi. Those

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who visit Lucerne only in the deadly oppression of the high season, when every lake-side quay swarms like an ant-hill, and every village rings like Babel, are apt to carry away wrong impressions of this still absolutely unimpaired lake. The playground at seasons is densely packed, but the place has received no permanent wrong ; those who can reconcile Nature and a crowd will be happy here even in August, when

“ All Bedlam or Parnassus is let out ;”

those, on the other hand, who seek the mountains, not exactly perhaps in the spirit of Manfred, but at any rate in Manfred’s happier mood—

“ No eyes

But mine now drink this sight of loveliness ;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude ”—

will easily find solace here in early spring, or late autumn, when the place is like a desert. No one has done the place a permanent wrong. Who can claim as much for the holly steeps of Windermere—for the distorted Clarens shore of Lake Geneva ?

Küssnacht itself is a large, typically Swiss, village, at the foot of the low pass—yet altogether too low to be dignified by the name of

“The Fooldom of Europe”

pass—that at this point intervenes between the basins of Zug and Lucerne. The place has this significance, that here for the first time, as we perambulate the lake, we encounter spots associated with the legend of William Tell. I suppose one must call it legend, and concede so much to the “higher critics,” though Ruskin’s clarion anger rings loud and clear. “A sort of triumphant shriek, like all the railway whistles going off at once at Clapham Junction, has gone up from the Fooldom of Europe at the destruction of the myth of William Tell. To us, every word of it was true—but mythically luminous with more than mortal truth. . . . The myth of William Tell is destroyed forsooth? and you have tunnelled Gothard and filled, maybe, the Bay of Uri—and it was all for you and your sake that the grapes dropped blood from the press of St. Jacob, and the pine-club struck down horse and helm in Morgarten glen?” If the history or William Tell itself is unauthentic, we must not demand authenticity for its visible memorials and sites. Gesler’s Castle above Küsnacht—or the fragments that remain of it—certainly never belonged to Gesler; whilst the chapel at the head of the Hohle Gasse, or Hollow Way,

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was certainly rebuilt in 1644, and did not exist at all at the end of the fifteenth century. This is the traditional spot where Tell, after escaping from the boat at the Tellsplatte, and running by way of Schwyz and the back of the Rigi, waited for Gesler on his return from Altdorf, and shot him dead with his terrible cross-bow before he could reach his castle-gate at Küssnacht. It is worth the traveller's while to press on a mile or two further in the direction of Arth, though this is to exchange the basin of the lake of Lucerne for that of the lake of Zug. The Zugersee lies almost at once beneath us, at a slightly lower level (roughly sixty feet) than the Vierwaldstättersee, and altogether of more placid and softer character—a pleasant thing to look at in the tender evening light, with its shore line embowered amidst orchards and deep rich meadows, and dotted in every direction with peaceful farms, but destitute of mountain grandeur, save immediately towards its head, where the dark forests of the Rigi, towards the west, and of the Rossberg, towards the east, open a gloomy “Gate of the hills,” beyond which, though really above Schwyz and the little lake of Lowerz, the tall, bare rock pyramids of the Great and Little Mitre (Gross



“The Myth of William Tell”

and Kleine Mythen) tower up in cleft magnificence above the cradle of Swiss freedom.

As to the story of William Tell, this, alas ! has gone the way of our own tales of Robin Hood (whom Mr. Sydney Lee dismisses as a “mythical forest elf”) and his Merry Men of Sherwood Forest. The legend first appears in the manuscript “Weisses Buch,” so-called from its white binding, that is still preserved at Sarnen, and which was written between 1467 and 1476; and in the poem called the “Tellenlied,” which dates from about 1474. Tell, however, is supposed to have lived at about the commencement of the fourteenth century. There are certainly some scraps of evidence that suggest in combination that the later Tell myth (as, for that matter, are presumably most myths) is based on some substratum of solid historical fact. Thus, there is said to be evidence that a religious observance of some kind was instituted in connection with Tell in the place where he lived in 1387; and it is stated, though not earlier than 1504, that a chapel was erected on the Tellsplatte, as the country people believed in commemoration of the landing there of William Tell, in 1388. The story as now commonly reported—that Tell

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refused to do obeisance to the Austrian Archduke's cap at Altdorf; that he shot the apple off his son's head at the brutal bidding of Gesler in the market-place of the same town; that he afterwards escaped from Austrian custody by springing from the boat to the shore at the Tellsplatte during the onset of a sudden squall; and that he shot the tyrant through the heart as the latter neared his castle hall at Küssnacht—first assumed its present form, in which it has been dramatized by Schiller, at the hands of Tschudi of Glarus, in the first half of the sixteenth century. Even as early, however, as the close of this same century the very existence of William Tell had been questioned by Guilmann in his *De Rebus Helveticis*. Voltaire was duly sceptical as to the story of the boy and the apple (“l’histoire de la pomme est bien suspecte”); but the patriotic faith of Canton Uri was still sufficiently strong at the close of the eighteenth century to consign to the flames at the hand of the public hangman the sceptical “Guillaume Tell; fable danoise.” The result, however, as expressed curtly in Murray's handbook, is that Tell has been banished from authentic history. Exactly similar legends or sagas of the tenth

The Lake of Alpnach

century are found in Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Holstein, and on the Rhine ; and our Clym of the Clough shoots at an apple on his son's head—

“But Cloudesle cleft the apple in two,
His son he did not nee’.”

Thus William Tell, like Arnold von Winkelried, recedes into the dim borderland of legend and history. After all, it is no irreparable loss. The individual Arnold, the individual Tell, were units merely of the great company of authentic, unnamed heroes who smote the Austrian tyrant at Sempach and Morgarten, who triumphed against the Burgundian at Grandson, Morat, and Nancy.

The third division, in still ascending scale of mountain grandeur, of the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons is that which extends south-westward from the intersection of the cross, and is known—certainly towards its extremity, and perhaps throughout its length—from the little village at its head as the Lake of Alpnach. Here the general effect is more definitely mountainous than that which has awaited us in sailing the two previous compartments : Rigi is now exchanged for Pilatus as the presiding genius and dominant monarch of the scene ; whilst the Alps of Unterwalden, and, beyond

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the low pass of the Brünig, the greater Alps of the Berner Oberland—the triple Maiden, Monk, and Giant—the Peak of Storms, and the Peak of Shrieking—at last supply that mountain background which everyone must have missed when looking up the water towards Küssnacht or Lucerne. The Oberland giants, it is true, are set at too great distance to impress the eye, however much they may affect the imagination, with the same sense of impending mountain majesty as we find in the Bay of Uri ; but Pilatus and the Stanserhorn are both immediate and splendid objects ; whilst even the dark, pine-clad crags of the little Bürgenstock, which is literally, like Catullus' Sermio, " all-but-island "—for it needs but the raising of the lake a very few feet, and the consequent flooding of the low isthmus between Stans and Buochs, to complete its insulation—push out into the lake with an assertive individuality that is wholly out of keeping with their relatively insignificant height (actually less than four thousand feet). Roughly half-way up, at a point where the lake is narrowed to the dimensions of a river by the sudden, sharp intrusion of the tall black cliffs of the Lopperberg (a footstool of Pilatus), the strait thus strangely



PILATUS FROM STANSTAD.

Ugly Utilitarianism

created is spanned across to Stanstad by an ugly iron bridge. The crass utilitarianism, in fact, that mars, though it cannot wholly disfigure, so much that is beautiful in Switzerland, and that contributes so little to the honour of the modern Switzer (however well it may fill his purse), is altogether painfully too evident along the shores of this division of the Lake of Lucerne. The hideous lines of electric wires along the margin of the lake are only less detestable than those that degrade the Pass of Llanberis ; this bridge across the narrows is as ugly as may be ; whilst Baedeker (with his usual businesslike lack of romanticism) duly chronicles in a single breath the presence of " water-falls and Portland cement factories " in the neighbouring glen of the Rotzloch.

The visitor is now fairly landed in the state of Unterwalden, the second most mountainous and romantic of the Four Forest Cantons. The Swiss have solved to perfection the problem of Home Rule : here is a little territory of less than two hundred square miles, and with a population in 1900 of less than thirty thousand people (less than that of Peterborough), which is yet, for all domestic intents and purposes, an indepen-

The Lake of Lucerne

dent sovereign state. Nay, not content with this, since these thirty thousand odd people, on their odd two hundred miles of mountain-land, were ill-content to dwell together in amity, the state is actually sub-divided, like Bâle and Appenzell, into two independent halves. Each of these is confined mostly to a single big valley, with its tributaries; and each has a capital that would hardly pass muster in the mill districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire for a fair-sized village. The half-canton of Obwalden is thus roughly conterminous with the valley of the Obwalden Aa, and has Sarnen, on the great highroad from Lucerne to Meiringen across the Brünig, for its rustic metropolis, whilst Nidwalden comprises most of the valley of the Nidwalden Aa, and finds its seat of government at Stans. Both these valleys, though largely sub-Alpine (the head of the Nidwalden Aa alone pierces deep into the heart of the greater hills, in the neighbourhood of Engelberg), are full of lovely scenery, though perhaps apt to be neglected by the too impatient tourist in his eagerness for the greater glories of Uri and the Bernese Highlands. It is pleasant, again, after so much destructive historical criticism, to encounter traces in these

“Bruder Klaus”

valleys of a less widely recognized Swiss hero, whose services to his country, if less dramatic than those of Tell and von Winkelried, are at any rate more authentic, and perhaps of wider import. Nicolas von der Flüe has found no niche in popular school histories, has evoked no “Battle of the Books,” and has inspired no great national drama. None the less his mild personality appears with high significance at a tremulously critical period in the evolution of Swiss unity and Swiss independence. Whether or not we accept the story of the famous meeting on the Rütli, it is certain that the foundations of free Switzerland were laid in August, 1291, by the perpetual alliance, for the maintenance of their ancient rights and liberties, of the three Cantons of Uri, Unterwalden, and Schwyz.

This is the stock whence has sprung the present Confederation of twenty-two free states ; but the stock nearly perished at the root from a little worm of discord in 1481, when the Confederates quarrelled at Stans over the admission to the Union (which then already numbered eight members) of the towns of Fribourg and Neuchâtel, and perhaps also over the division of the spoil that they had lately wrung from Charles the Bold.

The Lakè of Lucerne

The Diet had already debated for three days, and had broken up on the evening of the third with what seemed little chance of peace: the morrow threatened secession, and most likely civil war. Nicolas von der Flüe (often called affectionately Bruder Klaus; his real name was Löwenbrugger) was born at Flühli, where the Melch Thal joins the Aa valley, in 1417; and after many years of active life, including some experience of war, retired, in about his fiftieth year, to a hermitage in the gorge of the river a few minutes' walk distant from his native village, where he is said to have subsisted solely on the Sacramental Wafer, of which he partook once a month. He died in 1487, and was afterwards beatified, and in the course of last century, sainted. It so happened that his Confessor in 1481 was the head parish priest of Stans, a certain Heini Ingrund; who, early in the morning of the day succeeding the break-up of the Diet, sought out Nicolas in his hermitage, and obtained from him a message to the deputies urging reconciliation and peace. Armed with this exhortation he then hastened back to Stans, where he arrived, as we are told, all wet with perspiration, and hurriedly made the round of the inns where the deputies were still lodged, and



LOOKING UP THE LAKE, FROM BECKENRIED.

Stans

prevailed on them, by his tears and entreaties, to meet yet once again in consultation to hear the secret message of Brother Klaus. The words of this are not reported, but its effect was immediate and startling ; in less than an hour the irreconcilables were reconciled ; and the morning, which rose so gloomily with presage of disaster and dissolution, finally resulted in greater strength and union, as ratified in the Convention of Stans. A picture was painted by command of the government of Nidwalden, and may still be seen in a passage in the Rathhaus at Stans. It is curiously unhistorical in character, for Nicolas is here represented as appearing before the Diet in person, whereas nothing is better attested than that he merely sent a messenger of peace. Stans itself has other points of interest ; the house of Arnold von Winkelried has been already alluded to ; and there is a statue of the hero in the middle of the market-place, and another, with a fountain, near the church. Like most little towns in this part of Switzerland—like Sarnen, Arth, and Altdorf—the place is delightfully quaint and old-fashioned, with its often painted houses, and its wide-projecting eaves. Above it towers the Stanserhorn, with perhaps more bulk than shape ;

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whilst a mile or two down the valley, on the opposite shore of the lake, the graceful peaks of Pilatus give a welcome note of contrast. The church has a Romanesque tower ; but the body, like most of those in the Alps, is Classical rebuilding. In the graveyard, however, stands the medieval bone-house, which, like others in the neighbourhood, is a separate and complete little church. The bones have been removed, and perhaps decently interred ; but a tablet on the exterior still testifies to the appalling slaughter here of the people of Nidwalden—women and children, as well as men—to the number of more than four hundred, by the savage French Republicans in 1798. This frightful massacre at the hands of a brutal soldiery, infuriated by long resistance, lacked no circumstance of horror—

“Wasting fire and dying groan,
And priests slain on the altar-stone”—

that, after the lapse of another century, may rival the German triumphs in Belgium. The visitor will find himself repaid by prolonging his adventure up the valley of the Nidwalden Aa to the upland vale of Engelburg, where still stands the famous Benedictine monastery that was founded circa 1120, and that received its present name

The Hermit, Conrad Scheuber

("Mons Angelorum," or Hill of Angels) at the hands of Pope Calixtus II., from the tradition, celebrated by Wordsworth in some feeble lines in 1820, that the site was pointed out by angel songs. Roughly half-way up the valley is the village of Wolfenschiessen, hard by whose parish church is the little wooden house, or hermitage, that was inhabited by the hermit, Conrad Scheuber (1480-1559), a grandson of Nicolas von der Flüe. This was built on the mountain pastures of the Bettelirüt, high above Wolfenschiessen, in 1547; and was transplanted to its present site in 1867. On the hermitage, or church—I foolishly seem to have made no note on the spot, and my recollection is misty—is a series of naïve paintings, representing scenes from the life of the hermit, and showing him engaged (unless I mistake) in the congenial medieval hermit-task of outwitting, or otherwise discomfiting, a very material devil, or devils.

Sarnen, the capital of Obwalden, is situated at the north end of its lake of the same name, and is as interesting in its way as its rival Stans; but the green pastoral valley of the Obwalden Aa, though everywhere bordered by lofty hills, is altogether more open and less rugged than its

The Lake of Lucerne

Nidwalden namesake, and terminates, unlike the latter, in the gentle pass of the Brünig, instead of the lofty, snow-clad summits of the Spannörter and Titlis. High above the little mountain town, on a green pedestal of hill, is the stately, Classical parish church, commanding sweeping views across the wide sub-Alpine vale. Here, in the crowded burial-ground, I searched in vain in the early months of 1914 for memorials of any age—almost every cross or stone had been erected since I had last passed along this valley, in driving in the diligence from Meiringen to Lucerne, not quite a quarter of a century earlier. The old bone-houses stand nowadays mostly empty ; but the Swiss dead, I suspect, are still frequently deposited in graves that hold them only in temporary tenancy. Here, as elsewhere in Switzerland, you will note the local custom of often letting a photograph of the deceased into his head-stone, beneath a protecting sheet of glass. A mile or two to the south-west of Sarnen, by the shore of the placid lake, is the little village of Sachseln, the church of which (Classical again) is lucky in its possession of the bones of Bruder Klaus. I remember in 1887, on the occasion of the drive already mentioned,



BECKENRIED.

The Burial-Place of Bruder Klaus

passing somewhere in this neighbourhood a long procession of pilgrims, who were doubtless making their way to the shrine of the patriot-saint. "His bones," says Murray, "lie in a glass case above the high altar, the shutters of which are opened for travellers, and are also withdrawn at stated seasons, in order to exhibit the relics to crowds of pilgrims. . . . There is a wooden figure in the transept, clothed with the saint's veritable robes." I could not, however, discover this aerial place of sepulchre when I explored this church in 1914, nor do I remember the wooden figure, though I found statues of the saint, and of his grandson, Conrad Scheuber, in the parish church of Stans. The same two statements appear substantially in an old edition in my possession of 1872, and have perhaps escaped revision ; or perhaps my own memory and observation are at fault. I turn with little hope to the last edition of the egregious Baedeker (1913), and find that the burial of the saint at Sachseln is there entirely ignored. I find, however, as I expected, the number of bedrooms, and the rate of pension, at the Kreuz, the Engel, the Löwe, and the Rössli—at none of which doubtless excellent hotels I have ever stopped, or am ever likely to want to stay !

The Lake of Lucerne

VI

THE big central division of the Lake of Lucerne, extending from the intersection of the cross to the great right angle (it is practically a right angle) at Brunnen that marks the commencement of the Urner See, or Bay of Uri, is considerably the largest, and probably in some respects the most beautiful, but otherwise perhaps the least interesting, of all five reaches of the lake. It lacks, indeed, the superlative grandeur of the Bay of Uri, which corresponds, in English Lakeland, to the head of Ullswater, or Wastwater—curiously so, since in all three cases we have, not merely a climax of severe and even savage sterility, but in all the vista up the water is closed chiefly by a single, great, pyramidal hill: at Wastwater by Great Gable, at Ullswater by Caudale Moor, and here, at the Bay of Uri, by the dark outline of the Bristenstock. The Urner See, then, is the grandest and most imposing, and in some lights gloomiest, lake in Switzerland, though the Walenstadtsee, in Glarus and Gallen, will in these respects by some be thought a rival; but the mid-reaches of Lucerne, to the south of the red cliffs and dark woods of

The Middle Reach

Rigi, and contained towards the west by Pilatus, and towards the east by the twin Mythen—the last three nobly peaked—excel, I think, in open sunny beauty. Contrariwise, these reaches have but small historical interest, with the single exception of Gersau, as compared with the other four members: the Tell traditions, as we have seen, or shall see presently, are confined to the Bay of Küsnacht and to the lake of Uri; Arnold von Winkelried and Nicolas von der Flüe belong to Stans, and Stans, though actually set back a couple of miles or so from the margin of the lake, essentially belongs to the Bay of Alpnach; whilst even the little Lucernersee, though so humble in scenic splendour, leads at any rate to the quays of Lucerne itself, with its girdle of towers and ancient bridges, and with the banners in its Rathhaus that were wrested from the Austrian on the field of Sempach, and the armour there stripped from the dead body of Duke Leopold. Of most of the villages on this central reach, or reaches (for the division is subdivided by the narrow strait between the Nasen)—whether Weggis, Vitznau, Buochs, or Beckenried—there is little to be said, save that all are quaint and characteristic, and that all are

The Lake of Lucerne

delightfully situated on the margin of the lake. Each, of course, is not without its page in history—Buochs, for example, was burnt by the French in 1798; whilst Weggis was only finally incorporated into the Canton of Lucerne, after years of struggling independence, in 1535. Gersau, however, of all this group of littoral settlements, is in some respects by far the most significant. This is a mere village, at the foot of the wooded Hochfluh—the last big point to the east of the strangely isolated Rigi massif, and apparently the loftiest (5,574 feet), with the exception of Rigi Kulm. Hardly bigger than Küsnacht, and decidedly smaller than Brunnen, this town—if town it may be called—of less than fifteen hundred souls, with its neighbouring strip of lake-side territory, maintained for more than four long centuries its status as the smallest independent sovereign state in Europe. The place once belonged to the Dukes of Hapsburgh, who “levied duties on lambs, goatskins, fish, and grey cloth,” and by them it was mortgaged to the barons of Ramstein, who parted with its possession to the house of Von Moos, of Lucerne. From the latter Gersau bought its freedom in 1390 for the sum of 690 pfennigs, which it had



LAKE URI FROM BRUNNEN.

Hapsburgh and Hohenzollern

painfully “scraped together after ten years of hard toil.” “They had already, thirty-one years before, concluded a league with the Four Forest Cantons, and had even rendered assistance to the Confederates in the battle of Sempach ; where a native of the town captured the banner of Hohenzollern and brought it home and placed it in the church of Gersau, which even in its present form bears witness to the pride of the little territory.” Thus Gersau freed herself in the Middle Ages from the house of Hapsburgh, and triumphed against the house of Hohenzollern, just as civilized Europe, more than five hundred years later, agonised and struggled only yesterday :

“Haud aliter puppesque tuæ pubesque tuorum
Aut portum tenet aut pleno subit ostia velo,
Perge modo, et, qua te ducit via, dirige gressum.”

This central compartment of the lake is closed towards the east, as already stated, by the bare rock peaks of the Great and Little Mythen. These have been compared, unless I mistake, to the twin Langdale Pikes, in Westmoreland, as seen from the head of Windermere ; and probably the comparison has just as much validity as comparisons of the sort are ever capable of asserting. Nature, who is studious

The Lake of Lucerne

never to reproduce herself with complete and meticulous accuracy, is fond enough of teasing us with suggestion and reminiscence, and often enough finds pleasure in moulding "two lovely berries" on a single stem. The Mythen are removed, again like Wordsworth's "lusty twins," to a quite appreciable distance from the margin of the lake; but here, whereas in Westmoreland the intervening country is the sweetest confusion imaginable of undulating pasture and coppice along the broken course of the Brathay, the broad plinth that rises up in slow but persistent gradient from Brunnen to the foot of the Mythen is, to the writer's way of thinking (and he knows of no support from the judgment of other critics), the weakest bit of composition along the whole basin of Lucerne, and a tract of country—it is luckily very small—as dull and profitless as any to be found among the Alps. Yet this, in fact, as part and parcel of the Canton of Schwyz, is in a sense the very heart and core of Switzerland, and the veritable holy cradle of Swiss freedom. It has given its name to the whole Confederation, and the little town of Schwyz itself, which is visible rather too obviously as the land slopes up in the distance, though with less than eight

“All that is at Enmity with Joy”

thousand inhabitants, might very justly complain of Berne that the latter has usurped its proper dignity in attracting to itself the Swiss seat of federal government. Brunnen, which is called the port of Schwyz, and from which it is distant about three miles, is singularly crushed and over-weighted by the great hotels on the Seelisberg and the Axenfels, and has suffered perhaps more severely by the exploitation of its neighbourhood than any other single station on the lake. The attraction here, of course, is the majestic Bay of Uri, which comes into view with startling suddenness, in a few revolutions of the paddles, as the steamer approaches the quay at Brunnen; and whose splendour, luckily, neither monster hotel, nor monster crowd, nor the presence of the great St. Gothard railway (here first insistently apparent on the margin of the lake),

“nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy.”

One would have preferred, no doubt, to have approached this inner shrine of the hills—which is also the inner shrine of the great traditions of Swiss liberty—with somewhat less obtrusive parade of the engineering triumphs of the

The Lake of Lucerne

nineteenth century. One remembers for the moment how William and Dorothy Wordsworth came hither, and on foot, in 1820. "We descended," writes Dorothy in one of her journals, "by a long flight of steps, into the Vale, and, after about half a mile's walking, we arrived at *Brunnen*. Espied Wm. and M. [her brother, William, and his wife] upon a crag above the village, and they directed us to the Eagle Inn, where I instantly seated myself before a window, with a long reach of the Lake of Uri before me, the magnificent commencement to our regular approach to the St. Gothard Pass of the Alps. [Hitherto their approach from Calais had been devious, by way of the Rhine and the Oberland.] My first feeling was of extreme delight in the excessive *beauty* of the scene—I had expected something of a more awful impression from the Lake of Uri ; but nothing so *beautiful*." There was then no St. Gothard railway ; no over-weening hotels ; not even, perhaps, a steamboat on the lake !

It is singular, perhaps, that neither this superlative Bay of Uri, nor all its varied traditions of the Tellsplatte or the Rütli, should have succeeded in evoking a single verse from the poet whose inspiration had been kindled to such

The Cradle of Swiss Freedom

splendid effort in Scotland, less than twenty years previously, by the vision of a sweet-voiced girl by the spray of a Highland waterfall, by the careless evening greeting of a woman by a lake. The magic period of plenary inspiration was passed, indeed, for Wordsworth at the time of this continental tour in 1820; and yet it was after his return to England that he composed the great sonnet on King's College Chapel. The Rütli lies across the lake scarcely half an hour's row from Brunnen, yet it does not appear from Dorothy's journal that her brother even visited it. Here, on a green shelf of meadow by the side of the greener lake, and over-topped towards the west by the dark woods and cliffs of the Sonnenberg, are the few square yards of sacred soil where the three founders of Swiss freedom met together and conspired, if fables do not lie, for the rooting out of the Austrian tyrant in 1307. Their actual names are given, and the very day of meeting—November 7, in "the dead vast and middle of the night"—yet the imp of modern criticism, which has spared neither Tell nor Arnold von Winkelried, is clamorous again to rob us of this famous drama of conjuration on the Rütli. On the opposite shore of the lake, but considerably further to the south—to the south,

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in fact, of the little village of Sisikon, which itself may be reckoned as roughly the centre of the Bay of Uri—on the immediate margin of the water, and below the great, vertical, twisted precipices of the dark and towering Axenberg, is the little ledge of the Tellsplatte, where Tell is said to have sprung ashore from the boat, and from the custody of his warders, during the onslaught of a sudden squall, when on his way as a prisoner from Altdorf to Küssnacht. The chapel was rebuilt towards the close of last century, and is visible as we pass from the steamer. Behind it runs the great St. Gothard railway, on its way from Bâle to Milan; and higher up the cliff is the famous highroad of the Axenstrasse, which was driven along the face of these sheer and impracticable precipices, in alternate cutting, embankment and tunnel, by the zeal of the Federal Government in 1863-64, in order to better the communication between Canton Ticino and the rest of Switzerland. Ticino, or Tessin, the fifth largest of the states in acreage but the seventh in population, lies to the south of Uri, across the wild pass of the St. Gothard, on the sunny Italian side of the Alps, and was only admitted to the Confederation in 1803, though earlier by a dozen years than units of such

Altdorf and Tell

importance as Neuchâtel, Geneva, and the Valais. One is rather apt to forget that the Switzerland of the days before the French Revolution—the Switzerland whose name is a synonym for liberty ; the Switzerland of Sempach, Morat, and Morgarten—consisted only of the thirteen German-speaking states that are clustered mostly to the north and west of the original mountain nucleus of Uri, Unterwalden, and Schwyz.

With Flüelen, exactly at the head of the lake, we conclude our perambulation of the Vierwaldstättersee. I do not know that this little village has much of particular interest ; but a couple of miles beyond it is the small mountain capital of Uri, where Tell is reported in the immortal legend to have shot the apple from off his boy's head, and where his statue still stands in the diminutive market-place. The vale of the Reuss at Altdorf, and indeed as far south as Amsteg, where it is blocked, as it were, by the huge pyramid of the Bristenstock, and where the floor of the valley first begins to rise in earnest towards the far-away *col* of the St. Gothard, is merely a prolongation of the mountain basin of the Urnersee, with the substitution of flat green pasture for a pavement of crystal lake. Of the Bay of Uri itself I feel that I have said little, yet feel,

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with some sincerity, that there is little to be said. Its elements, though majestic, are exceedingly downright and simple, whereas those of the rest of the Lake of Lucerne are multiform, subtle, and complex. Whatever be the impression that it effects on the spectator, it is likely to accomplish this at once ; it is no finer at the head than at the foot ; and all that it has of grandeur (and nothing of the kind in the Alps is grander) is flashed upon us in a moment, in complete and final revelation, when first it comes into vision between the piers at Trieb and Brunnen. It varies, of course, in splendour as the day is bright or dull ; but less, I imagine, than the lower reaches of the lake, which depend more for their effect on screens of mountain more remote, and are capable of assuming softer and lovelier colouring exactly because their atmospheric distances are greater. In gloom, or rain, or heat-haze, it is the one division of the lake that will fail to disappoint us, but perhaps it is also the one division that responds less readily to the vivifying influences of sunshine and blue sky. Nor is it really wild, if one may say so without paradox, in the sense in which Ennerdale is wild, or Wastdale Head, or Langstrath, among the familiar fells of Cumberland. The cliffs that drop directly to its eastern shore are

The Bay of Uri

indeed tremendous and unapproachable, but above them, as we know, are gentle Alpine pastures that are musical with cow-bells, and meadows that are fragrant with hay and flowers. The tops of distant snow-clad mountains, again, though visible from its waters, are really removed to immense distances, above it and beyond it, and though they ring it round in insuperable barrier, almost belong to another world. Land where you can, or will, and you find your immediate environment scarcely wilder, if wilder at all, than the lower slopes of Pilatus or Rigi. It is only, in fact, in the upland vales of Switzerland—at spots like the Grimsel Hospice, or towards the summits of passes like the Simplon or the Splügen—that the ordinary wanderer, who is not a climber, will realize that *abandon* of wild and savage sterility that delights him in a hundred glens among the mountains of Scotland or Carnarvonshire, in Glen Sannox, or Glen Sligachan, in Llanberis, or Cwm Llydaw. The Bay of Uri is indeed majestic, and its framework of distant summits is indeed magnificently wild, yet not here, I think, shall we taste with Shelley the strange

“Pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.”

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